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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT COLOM
AND VICE PRESIDENT ESPADA
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¶1. (SBU) President and Mrs. Colom hosted the Deputy
Secretary, Mrs. Negroponte, WHA A/S Shannon, and the
Ambassador for drinks and dinner at the National Palace on
the evening of June 5. The event, which included music by
the Presidential marimba band and a tour of the National
Palace, was primarily a social occasion. During the dinner
President and Mrs. Colom spoke about the various social
initiatives the government is pursuing, particularly the
conditional transfer payments being made to families in the
poorest 44 municipalities in Guatemala. Colom mentioned that
he considers Mauricio Funes, the FMLN presidential candidate
in El Salvador, to be a good friend. He said he has
counseled Funes to follow a moderate line in domestic and
foreign policy if he wants to succeed in the 2009 Salvadoran
presidential election. President and Mrs. Colom commented
several times on how much they appreciated President Bush's
warm hospitality during the April visit to Washington.

¶2. (SBU) The Deputy Secretary breakfasted with Vice
President Rafael Espada on June 6. There was an extended
discussion of the struggle against organized crime and the
importance of the Administration's Merida Initiative. Espada
later commented to the press that the Merida Initiative was
coherent and feasible. Espada commented generally that the
Colom government was making progress on law enforcement and
social issues, but perhaps had not fully appreciated how
conservative and resistant to change Guatemalan society was.
This was true not only of the business elite, but of the
entire culture, including indigenous/Mayan society.

¶3. (U) D staff cleared this message prior to transmission.
Derham